

Chapter 1 The Gospel and Its Objectives

. . . this is the gospel, the glad tidings, which the voice out of the heavens bore record unto us—

That he came into the world, even Jesus, to be crucified for the world, and to bear the sins of the world, and to sanctify the world, and to cleanse it from all unrighteousness;

That through him all might be saved whom the Father had put into his power and made by him;

Who glorifies the Father, and saves all the works of his hands, except those sons of perdition who deny the Son after the Father has revealed him.—JOSEPH SMITH.

That which distinguished Joseph Smith from other prominent men of his age was the claim that through him the gospel of Jesus Christ had been restored to earth in its purity and in its fulness. In 1823, the angel Moroni informed the young prophet that “the time was at hand for the Gospel in all its fullness to be preached in power, unto all nations *that a people might be prepared for the Millennial reign.*”¹ The divine program was to be a new principle for regenerating man which was not then known in the modern world. “The great designs of God in relation to the salvation of the human family, are very little understood by the professedly wise and intelligent generation in which we live,” Joseph Smith explained.² He was sent as a prophet of God to make clear its message and program. “I never design to communicate any ideas but what are simple,” the Prophet declared; “for to this end I am sent.”³

Basic Concepts Of The Gospel

Central Place of Christ in the Gospel

The gospel of Jesus Christ is often defined as the good news, or glad tidings, of salvation. This it is. Joseph Smith wrote: “Now, what do we hear in the gospel which we have received? A voice of gladness! A voice of mercy from heaven; and a voice of truth out of the earth.”⁴ But the Prophet more specifically stressed “that it was one thing to proclaim good tidings, and another to tell what these good tidings were.”⁵

The glad tidings which the gospel proclaims concern Jesus Christ and that which He did to bring about the salvation of man from his fallen state. Joseph Smith therefore declared that the fundamental principle of the gospel “is the testimony of the apostles and prophets concerning Jesus Christ, that He died, was buried, and rose again the third day, and ascended into heaven.” Of this central principle the latter-day Seer said: “All other things which pertain to our religion are only appendages to it.”⁶

Being the central figure in the divine plan of life and salvation, Christ is honored by having that plan named after Him. He is the light and the life of the world, for He is the source of the divine powers of truth, light, life, and godliness which man receives from the Father. The plan of salvation, therefore, is called the gospel of Jesus Christ. But the truth and power which Jesus gives to man originate with the Father, Elohim, and Christ came to earth to do the will of the Man of Holiness. The gospel is the Father’s plan of salvation for man.⁷

As Jesus ministered to the Nephites after His resurrection, special attention was given to the primary message of the gospel. As He descended from heaven, the voice of the Father declared: “Behold my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name—hear ye him.”⁸ Christ then stretched forth His hand and said:

... I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world.

And behold, I am the light and the life of the world; and I have drunk out of that bitter cup which the Father hath given me, and have glorified the Father in taking upon me the sins of the world, in the which I have suffered the will of the Father in all things from the beginning.⁹

That there might be no mistake concerning His identity and the nature of the mission which He performed in making the atonement, Jesus then said: “Arise and come forth unto me, that ye may thrust your hands into my side, and also that ye may feel the prints of the nails in my hands and in my feet, that ye may know that I am the God of Israel, and the God of the whole earth, and have been slain for the sins of the world.”¹⁰

Thus the testimony of Jesus was given to the Nephites with unimpeachable evidence to support the central truths of the divine plan of life and salvation. Christ later elaborated upon the foundations of the gospel, saying:

... I have given unto you my gospel, and this is the gospel which I have given unto you—that I came into the world to do the will of the Father, because my Father sent me.

And my Father sent me that I might be lifted up upon the cross; and after that I had been lifted up upon the cross, that I might draw all men unto me, that as I have been lifted up by men even so should men be lifted up by the Father, to stand before me, to be judged of their works, whether they be good or whether they be evil—

And for this cause have I been lifted up; therefore, according to the power of the Father I will draw all men unto me, that they may be judged according to their works.¹¹

The message of Christ as given in the above declarations and others which are found in the scriptures may be categorized into the following statements concerning Him:

1. He is the Son of God—the Only Begotten Son of the Father, the Man of Holiness.
2. He is the Messiah, the Anointed One, whom the prophets testified would come into the world.
3. He is the light and the life of the world in that the glory of the Father is first extended to Him and given through Him to others.
4. He came to earth to acquire a physical body as part of the divine plan for His own eternal progression and that of others.
5. He came to do the will of the Father—to be the light and the life of the world, to establish the way of salvation, and to drink of the bitter cup which the Father gave

Him.

6. He came to descend below all things in His mortal experience and in His atonement, that He might comprehend all things and thereby know intelligently how to succor His people and lead them from spiritual darkness and death unto light.

7. He came that He might be lifted up upon the cross, to satisfy the demands of divine justice in relation to Adam's transgression and the sins of all men.

8. He came to break the bands of physical death on earth.

9. He came to overcome the world's spiritual death.

10. He came to acquire the fulness of the Father's glory and to develop that glory in others according to their willingness to receive it.

11. He came to gain the right and the power to lift all men up in the resurrection and to judge them at the last day.

By fulfilling His divine mission on earth, Jesus became man's redeemer, his mediator with the Father, his judge, and his advocate before the Man of Holiness. The proclamation of these glorious truths constitutes the foundation of the gospel message.

Man's Obligations and Promises in the Gospel

Like a coin, the gospel of Jesus Christ may be said to have two sides and two separate but related inscriptions. On one side is inscribed the glad tidings concerning the Son of God and that which He did to establish the program of salvation in the world. On the other side is inscribed that which fallen man must do in order to be reconciled to God and to partake of the mercy, truth, and power of the great Redeemer unto eternal life.

Having proclaimed that part of the gospel which related directly to His mission, Jesus explained to the Nephites what man must do to fulfill his obligations in the plan of life and salvation. "No unclean thing can enter into his [the Father's] kingdom," Christ observed; "therefore nothing entereth into his rest save it be those who have washed their garments in my blood, because of their faith, and the repentance of all their sins, and their faithfulness unto the end." Of the way man must come unto Jesus to accomplish these objectives, the Master said: "Now this is the commandment: Repent, all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me and be baptized in my name, that ye may be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost, that ye may stand spotless before me at the last day." Concluding, Jesus stressed: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, this is my gospel."¹²

In another statement to the Nephites, Jesus said:

. . . this is my doctrine, [that] . . . whoso believeth in me, and is baptized, the same shall be saved; and they are they who shall inherit the kingdom of God; . . . and whoso believeth in me believeth in the Father also; and unto him will the Father bear record of me, for he will visit him with fire and with the Holy Ghost.¹³

This is the message which was revealed to the world in modern times through the Book of Mormon as a new witness for Christ. Concerning the way that leads to eternal life, Nephi said:

. . . the gate by which ye should enter is repentance and baptism by water;

and then cometh a remission of your sins by fire and by the Holy Ghost. *And then are ye in this straight and narrow path which leads to eternal life; yea, ye have entered in by the gate; ye have done according to the commandments of the Father and the Son; and ye have received the Holy Ghost, which witnesses of the Father and the Son, unto the fulfilling of the promise which he hath made, that if ye entered in by the way ye should receive.*¹⁴

Jacob, the brother of Nephi, explained:

. . . he [God] commandeth all men that they must repent, and be baptized in his name, having perfect faith in the Holy One of Israel, or they cannot be saved in the kingdom of God.

And if they will not repent and believe in his name, and be baptized in his name, and endure to the end, they must be damned; for the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, has spoken it.¹⁵

Revelations given to Joseph Smith define the basic program of the gospel in similar terms. One said in January of 1831: “And this is my gospel—repentance and baptism by water, and then cometh the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost, even the Comforter, which showeth all things, and teacheth the peaceable things of the kingdom.”¹⁶ Another revelation instructed:

. . . open your mouths and they shall be filled, saying: Repent . . . and be baptized, every one of you, for a remission of your sins; yea, be baptized even by water, and then cometh the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost.

Behold, verily, verily, I say unto you, this is my gospel; and remember that they shall have faith in me or they can in nowise be saved; and upon this rock I will build my church. . . .¹⁷

The basic message of the gospel as it pertains to man’s responsibility in the divine plan of life and salvation may be categorized into the following points:

1. Man must exercise living faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God and the Savior of the world.
2. He must repent of all sin.
3. Man must be baptized in water to obtain a remission of personal sins.
4. He must receive the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost, which is given as a gift of God to those who come unto God in the right way.

By complying with these requirements, man can enter the straight and narrow path which leads to eternal life. By continuing in that path in obedience to the higher principles and ordinances of the gospel, he can finally enter into the presence of God crowned with glory and power.

First Principles and Ordinances of the Gospel

In referring to that phase of the divine plan of life and salvation which pertains to man and his obligations, Joseph Smith said: “The first principles of the Gospel are faith, repentance, baptism for the remission of sins, with the promise of the Holy Ghost.”¹⁸

These principles are also the first ordinances, or channels of divine mercy and power, in the plan of salvation. In identifying them as such and in stating their relationship to the atonement of Christ, the Prophet wrote:

We believe that through the atonement of Christ all mankind may be saved by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel. We believe that these *ordinances* are 1st, Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; 2d, Repentance; 3d, Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; 4th, Laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost.¹⁹

Since these principles are also the initial ordinances of the gospel, it is proper to designate them as “the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel,” as does the current version of the Articles of Faith.²⁰

Necessity of All the Principles and Ordinances

Each principle and ordinance of the gospel is a necessary step in acquiring the grace and power of Jesus Christ. Each step is designed to prepare and guide those who express genuine faith into full spiritual union with God. The principles of the gospel constitute the essential truths within the divine plan, while the ordinances of the gospel are the designated rites or ceremonies which act as channels through which the mercy and power of God are extended to man. The laws of the gospel set forth the standard of conduct that teaches the exactness of Christ, and they reveal the need for man’s nature to be changed so that he can attain to the righteousness of God. All who exercise living faith in Christ and apply the principles of the gospel in their lives are given, through the ordinances of the gospel, strength, power, and enlightenment by the Holy Spirit to enable them to obey the laws of God. In turn, obedience to the laws of the gospel brings a greater manifestation of divine truth and power into the life of man, which results in a more perfect union with Christ.

It follows that it would be futile for man to believe in only one principle or to receive only one ordinance of the gospel without eventually receiving and applying them all. Joseph Smith therefore considered baptism of water and the baptism of fire, or the Holy Ghost, as being “necessarily and inseparably connected.”²¹ He said:

You might as well baptize a bag of sand as a man, if not done in view of the remission of sins and getting of the Holy Ghost. Baptism by water is but half a baptism, and is good for nothing without the other half—that is, the baptism of the Holy Ghost.²²

Speaking of the interrelationship of all the first principles and ordinances of the gospel, the Prophet said:

We discover, in order to be benefited by the doctrine of repentance, we must believe in obtaining the remission of sins. And in order to obtain the remission of sins, we must believe in the doctrine of baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. And if we believe in baptism for the remission of sins, we may expect a fulfillment of the promise of the Holy Ghost, for the promise extends to all whom the Lord our God shall call.²³

The above program is but the foundation of the gospel upon which man must

build. After having complied with the first principles and ordinances of the gospel and having thereby established his life upon the gifts, powers, and blessings of the Holy Ghost, man must continue in the program of the gospel and meet the challenge which Jesus made to the Nephites when He said: “Whoso repenteth and is baptized in my name shall be filled; and if he endureth to the end, behold, him will I hold guiltless before my Father at that day when I shall stand to judge the world.”²⁴

Gospel of Reconciliation

Joseph Smith referred to the plan of life and salvation as “the Gospel of reconciliation.”²⁵ First, by the infinite atonement which He made, Jesus reconciled the demands of eternal law for the sins of all men; He paid the full debt of justice for Adam and all his descendants to the latest generation. Second, having reconciled the demands of divine law, Christ requires all men to be reconciled to Him as their Redeemer. Herein the two major phases of the gospel plan are expressed. In his Inspired Revision of the Bible, the Prophet corrected the biblical rendering of the Apostle Paul’s statement on the gospel of reconciliation to read:

. . . if any man live in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new,

And receiveth all the things of God, *who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation:*

To wit, *that God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.*

Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; *we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.*

For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.²⁶

The task of reconciling himself to Christ requires preparation on the part of man and is not to be achieved in a moment. Having spoken of the final place which man may attain through the gospel, Joseph Smith said: “But we consider that this is a station to which no man ever arrived in a moment: he must have been instructed in the government and laws of that kingdom by proper degrees, until his mind is capable in some measure of comprehending the propriety, justice, equality, and consistency of the same.”²⁷ Only when man is able to understand and fully apply God’s perfect law of liberty and truth in his life can the gospel of reconciliation fulfill its final purpose.

Doctrines of Resurrection and Eternal Judgment

Having reconciled the demands of eternal law and having provided man with the divine program by which it is possible for him to be reconciled to God, Jesus then designs to raise all men from the grave and judge them according to the way they respond to the message of truth and life. These actions will complete the program of the gospel for man. Joseph F. Smith, nephew of the Prophet and a President of the Church, said: “If there is one principle of the gospel of Jesus Christ that goes directly to the very foundation of justice and righteousness, it is that great and glorious and God-like

principle that every man will have to render an account for that which he does, and every man will be rewarded for his works, whether they be good or evil.”²⁸

Since the actions of resurrection and judgment are basic in the plan of life and salvation, Joseph Smith stated that “the Doctrine of the Resurrection of the Dead and the Eternal Judgment are necessary to preach among the first principles of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.”²⁹ The Prophet explained “that the doctrine of eternal judgment was perfectly understood by the [ancient] Apostles.”³⁰ Because the message of man’s accountability to God in the resurrection is inseparably associated with the proclamation of the gospel, the Quorum of the Twelve instructed the Elders: “Preach the first principles of the doctrine of Christ—faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, repentance toward God, baptism in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, *the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.*”³¹

Christ made the atonement in order to bring about the resurrection and judgment of all men. “He suffereth this that the resurrection might pass upon all men,” Jacob declared, “that all might stand before him at the great and judgment day.”³² Having explained that as He had been “lifted up by men,” even so will all men be “lifted up by the Father” to stand before Him to be judged, Jesus said to the Nephites:

. . . for this cause have I been lifted up; therefore, according to the power of the Father I will draw all men unto me, that they may be judged according to their works.

And it shall come to pass, that whoso repenteth and is baptized in my name shall be filled; and if he endureth to the end, behold, him will I hold guiltless before my Father at that day when I shall stand to judge the world.

And he that endureth not unto the end, the same is he that is also hewn down and cast into the fire, from whence they can no more return [to the presence of God], because of the justice of the Father.

And this is the word which he hath given unto the children of men.³³

As Jesus said, this is the word, or the gospel, which God has declared unto men.

The doctrines of resurrection and eternal judgment were basic elements in the message of the gospel which the Nephite prophets taught. Having explained that mercy is given to the penitent through the atonement of Jesus Christ, Alma continued: “. . . and the atonement bringeth to pass the resurrection of the dead; and the resurrection of the dead bringeth back men into the presence of God; and thus they are restored into his presence, to be judged according to their works, according to the law and justice.”³⁴

The actions of resurrection and judgment occur for all men, whether they are wicked or righteous. In confirming the teachings of Amulek to the people of Ammonihah, Alma said:

. . . Amulek hath spoken plainly concerning death, and being raised from this mortality to a state of immortality, and being brought before the bar of God, to be judged according to our works.

Then if our hearts have been hardened, yea, if we have hardened our

hearts against the word, insomuch that it has not been found in us, then will our state be awful, for then we shall be condemned.

For our words will condemn us, yea, all our works will condemn us; we shall not be found spotless; and our thoughts will also condemn us; and in this awful state we shall not dare to look up to our God; and we would fain be glad if we could command the rocks and the mountains to fall upon us to hide us from his presence.

But this cannot be; we must come forth and stand before him in his glory, and in his power, and in his might, majesty, and dominion, and acknowledge to our everlasting shame that all his judgments are just; that he is just in all his works, and that he is merciful unto the children of men, and that he has all power to save every man that believeth on his name and bringeth forth fruit meet for repentance.³⁵

The Gospel A Plan Of Mercy, Truth, And Power

The Gospel the Power of God unto Salvation

“The Apostle [Paul] says the gospel is the power of God unto salvation unto them that believe,” Joseph Smith observed; “and also informs us that life and immortality were brought to light through the gospel.”³⁶ Having cited Paul’s definition of the gospel, Sidney Rigdon explained:

It is God’s scheme of saving men, and this scheme is made known in the New Testament, which scheme of things (or gospel) consists in putting men in possession of the power of God; for it is God’s *power* to save men. And how is it God’s power unto salvation? Answer, by putting those who receive it into possession of the power of God.³⁷

Other leading men among the Saints stressed this view of the gospel. Lorenzo Snow reasoned: “It would be simply foolish indeed to expect the Latter-day Saints in these last days to comply with the celestial law that proceeds from God, and with his designs to elevate the

people into his presence, except they were sustained by a supernatural power.” The manifestation of divine power is necessary, Elder Snow continued, that men might be prepared to endure the trials and afflictions required “to prepare them more fully for celestial glory; so that they should walk not in darkness, but in the light and power of God, and be raised above the things of the world, and be superior to the things around them; so that they might walk independently beneath the celestial world, and in the sight of God and heaven, as free men, pursuing that course that should be marked out to them by the Holy Ghost; that course by which they could elevate themselves to knowledge and power, and thus prepare themselves to receive the glory that God proposes to confer upon them.”³⁸

When man reconciles himself to God through the gospel, the Holy Spirit comes to him in comfort, in enlightenment, in strength, and in power. Joseph Smith observed that those saints who faithfully apply the principles and ordinances of the gospel in their lives may expect to have the Holy Ghost as their “constant companion”,³⁹ and by walking in the

light and power of the Spirit, they may finally “grow up” in Christ and “receive a fulness of the Holy Ghost.”⁴⁰ In voicing this objective, Brigham Young said: “I want to see men and women breathe the Holy Ghost in every breath of their lives, living constantly in the light of God’s countenance.”⁴¹

The Gospel a Program of Human Regeneration

The gospel is a divine program by which man can be regenerated and made a “new creature”⁴² in Christ. Jesus spoke of His disciples as those who were following Him in “the regeneration” which leads to immortal glory.⁴³ This regeneration is necessary because, by the transgression of Adam, mortal man is in a fallen state.⁴⁴ Unless he is transformed by the living power of Christ, he cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven.⁴⁵

It takes divine truth and power to regenerate man so that he is able to enter into the presence of God. Moroni declared that God works “by power, according to the faith of the children of men, the same today and tomorrow and forever.”⁴⁶ Only in this way can man rise out of spiritual darkness and death into the light and life of God’s glory. “That which is of God is light,” a revelation explained; “and he that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day.”⁴⁷ Another revelation stated that if the Spirit “be in you it shall abound.” It then added: “And if your eye be single to my glory, your whole bodies shall be filled with light, and there shall be no darkness in you.” By following this path, man can enter eventually into the presence of God. The revelation concluded: “Therefore, sanctify yourselves that your minds become single to God, and the days will come that you shall see him; for he will unveil his face unto you.”⁴⁸

To such extent did Nephi and Moroni view the gospel as being an enlightening and transforming power, they declared that those who obey the requirements of the divine program will be able to “speak with a new tongue, yea, even with the tongue of angels.”⁴⁹ By means of this divine, regenerating power, the Nephites were made alive in Christ.⁵⁰ Joseph Smith considered this renewal a literal and tangible transformation. He wrote by revelation that the Saints could be “sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies.”⁵¹ He and others also spoke of the Spirit as having actual physical effects upon the body that could be observed outwardly by others.⁵²

The Gospel a Plan to Redeem Man from the Fall

As a divine plan for regenerating man spiritually, the gospel is designed to redeem him from his fallen state in mortality. The plan of life and salvation should therefore be seen in light of the doctrines which have been set forth in earlier chapters of this work⁵³—the doctrine of God, the state of life in the creation, the fall of Adam, the nature of man in mortality, and the atonement of Jesus Christ. Joseph Smith set the basic program of the gospel in this context when he wrote by revelation:

. . . there is a God in heaven, who is infinite and eternal, from everlasting to everlasting the same unchangeable God, the framer of heaven and earth, and all things which are in them;

And . . . he created man, male and female, after his own image and in his own likeness, created he them;

And gave unto them commandments that they should love and serve him, the only living and true God, and that he should be the only being whom they should worship.

But by the transgression of these holy laws man became sensual and devilish, and became fallen man.

Wherefore, the Almighty God gave his Only Begotten Son, as it is written in those scriptures which have been given of him.

He suffered temptations but gave no heed unto them.

He was crucified, died, and rose again the third day;

And ascended into heaven, to sit down on the right hand of the Father, to reign with almighty power according to the will of the Father;

That as many as would believe and be baptized in his holy name, and endure in faith to the end, should be saved—

Not only those who believed after he came in the meridian of time, in the flesh, but all those from the beginning, even as many as were before he came, who believed in the words of the holy prophets, who spake as they were inspired by the gift of the Holy Ghost, who truly testified of him in all things, *should have eternal life,*

As well as those who should come after, *who should believe in the gifts and callings of God by the Holy Ghost,* which beareth record of the Father and of the Son;

Which Father, Son, and Holy Ghost is one God, infinite and eternal, without end. Amen.

And we know that all men must repent and believe on the name of Jesus Christ, and worship the Father in his name, and endure in faith on his name to the end, or they cannot be saved in the kingdom of God.⁵⁴

Preparatory Gospel Compared with Everlasting Gospel

The divine plan of the gospel can be divided into two general divisions: (1) the preparatory gospel and (2) the fulness of the everlasting gospel. The preparatory gospel is the initial phase of the divine plan, and it is designed to “prepare the way for a greater revelation of God.”⁵⁵ A revelation explained that the preparatory gospel as taught by John the Baptist in New Testament times consisted of “the gospel of repentance and of baptism, and the remission of sins, and the law of carnal commandments.”⁵⁶ The fulness of the everlasting gospel, on the other hand, is the higher program of salvation which is concerned with developing in man the divine truths, powers, gifts, and blessings of the Holy Spirit until he is able to partake of the divine nature, or glory, of God and make his calling and election sure to a fulness of glory in the resurrection. When President Martin Van Buren asked Joseph Smith how the Latter-day Saints were different in their religious system from other faiths, the Prophet explained that they “differed in mode of baptism, and the gift of the Holy Ghost.” “All other considerations,” he assumed, “were contained in the gift of the Holy Ghost.”⁵⁷ The earthly program of this higher phase of the plan of

life and salvation is consummated when man receives the fulness of the sealing power of the priesthood.

The preparatory gospel is administered by the authority of the Aaronic Priesthood. When Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery received this priesthood, they were told that the work which they could perform by its authority was “a preparatory work, or a going before.” Their office and authority “did not extend to the laying on of hands for the giving of the Holy Ghost.” That was “a greater work.”⁵⁸

The everlasting gospel is administered by the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood. Of the higher priesthood a revelation said: “This greater priesthood administereth the gospel and holdeth the key to the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God.”⁵⁹ That knowledge includes more than theological concepts. It consists, essentially, of the personal revelation of God to man through the power of the Holy Ghost, and the knowledge which man can acquire by coming into the presence of God and being made like Him. The above revelation continues:

Therefore, in the ordinances thereof [of the Melchizedek Priesthood], the power of godliness is manifest.

And without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh;

For without this [the power of godliness] no man can see the face of God, even the Father, and live.⁶⁰

The term “preparatory gospel” implies that when this phase of the plan of salvation is completed it may then be terminated. That which prepares man for a higher program is fulfilled and consummated when he is established fully on the greater law.⁶¹ This may have been what John the Baptist meant when he said, as he conferred the Aaronic Priesthood upon Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery: “. . . and this shall never be taken again from the earth, *until* the sons of Levi do offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness.”⁶² The statement implies that when the designated sacrifice is made, the functions of the Aaronic Priesthood which the angel specified may be discontinued in the earth.

Joseph Smith indicated that one aspect of the sacrifice by the sons of Levi⁶³—that sacrifice which is to be accomplished by service in the priesthood—can be made by the Saints administering the ordinances of the gospel to others.⁶⁴ When the preparatory gospel has been given to all who will receive it, who are appointed to come to the earth, its functions may then be discontinued. There will be no need to preach repentance or administer baptism to those who dwell on the resurrected and celestialized earth; nor will the ministry of angels, a function related to the preparatory gospel, be required for those who dwell in the presence of God.

By contrast, the everlasting gospel is designed to bring man into a spiritual union with God which will never cease. Unlike the preparatory gospel, there will be no point, either in time or in eternity, when the program of the everlasting gospel will be fulfilled or consummated. Jesus declared to the brother of Jared: “In me shall all mankind have light [i.e., glory], *and that eternally*, even they who shall believe on my name.”⁶⁵ The faithful will continue to receive light and truth, or glory, through Christ forever.⁶⁶

Objectives And Purposes Of The Gospel

Man's Ultimate Goal in the Gospel

Joseph Smith taught that before man can successfully apply the gospel in his life, he must understand the ultimate objective to which the plan of life and salvation leads. He wrote by revelation that the Saints should look to the “end of their salvation.”⁶⁷ In expressing the great objective of the gospel, the Prophet said: “It is the first principle of the gospel [i.e., the initial proposition upon which the divine plan rests] to know for a certainty the character of God, and *to know that we may converse with Him as one man converses with another.*”⁶⁸ On another occasion, he spoke of the gospel as “the plan of redemption, a power of atonement, a scheme of salvation, *having as its great objects, the bringing of men back into the presence of the King of heaven, crowning them in the celestial glory, and making them heirs with the Son to that inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and which fadeth not away.*”⁶⁹ Because this is man's goal in the gospel, a revelation admonished the Saints to “seek the face of the Lord always.”⁷⁰ “How indescribably glorious are these things to mankind,” the latter-day Seer exclaimed! “Of a truth they may be considered tidings of great joy to all people; and tidings, too, that ought to fill the earth and cheer the heart of every one when sounded in his ear.”⁷¹

The How and What of True Worship

Joseph Smith taught that by true worship man can acquire the attributes and powers of God through the Holy Spirit until he is able to receive a fulness of the Father's glory in the resurrection. The Prophet explained: “As the Son partakes of the fullness of the Father through the Spirit, so the saints are, by the same Spirit, to be partakers of the same fullness, to enjoy the same glory.”⁷² This, essentially, is the purpose of true worship. In expressing vital insight into the nature of God's glory, a revelation stated:

I give unto you these sayings *that you may understand and know how to worship, and know what you worship,* that you may come unto the Father in my [Christ's] name, and in due time receive of his fulness.

For if you keep my commandments you shall receive of his fulness, and be glorified in me as I am in the Father; therefore, I say unto you, you shall receive grace for grace.⁷³

The several points in this statement enable man to see clearly the nature and purpose of true worship. First, man must recognize that God is a personal being of glory and power.

Second, man must approach the Father, Elohim, in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ.⁷⁴ This is the only name which is given under heaven whereby salvation can come unto man.⁷⁵ In Christ are centered the glory and power of the Father which are to be given to man.⁷⁶

Third, man's purpose in true worship is to obtain divine truth and power until, in due time, he receives a fulness of the Father's glory. Jesus is the great prototype. He did not possess the fulness of the Father's glory at first.⁷⁷ But by obedience to the will of the Father, He finally obtained a fulness.⁷⁸ True worship is designed to make man like Christ in possessing the glory and power of the Man of Holiness.

Fourth, man must keep the commandments of Christ in order to receive a fulness of glory. Of the relationship of obedience to the glorification of man, the revelation says: “He that keepeth his [God’s] commandments receiveth truth and light, until he is glorified in truth and knoweth all things.”⁷⁹

Fifth, though it is the truth and power of the Father, Elohim, which man receives in true worship, these things are given to him through Christ; and man must be glorified in Christ, as Jesus is glorified in the Father. For this reason Christ made the atonement, “that he might be in all and through all things, the light of truth.”⁸⁰ The glorification of man in Christ, as He is glorified in the Father, is the consummation of the Master’s purpose regarding those who obey His law of redemption.⁸¹

Finally, man must receive “grace for grace” in acquiring the glory of God; he must receive grace from God by giving grace to others.⁸² Service in doing the will of God is the key to the spiritual development of man. Man can truly worship only by serving his fellow men in the way marked out by the law of God. By receiving grace for grace, Jesus finally acquired a fulness of the glory of the Father.⁸³ Man must do the same. A basic difference between Christ and man is that man is in need of a remission of personal sins, while Jesus was not. But when man receives a remission of sins through the preparatory gospel, he is in a situation similar to that of Jesus, in His acquisition of the glory of God. Man must then give grace to others, in doing the will of God, until he develops from grace to grace and finally receives a fulness of the glory of the Father. Wilford Woodruff explained:

The revelations of Jesus Christ teach us that the Saviour was born in the flesh; and the Father said that He did not give him a fulness [of glory] at first, but [He] continued from grace to grace until he had received a fulness, and was called the Son of God because he did not receive a fulness at first. *We in like manner should seek with all our souls to grow in grace, light, and truth, that in due time we may receive a fulness.*⁸⁴

An incident in the life of Moses illustrates the central purpose of the gospel and of true worship. Having beheld Christ in the glory and power of the Father, Moses was later tempted by Satan, who came unto him saying: “Moses, son of man, worship me.” But Moses responded:

Who art thou? For behold, I am a son of God, in the similitude of his Only Begotten; and *where is thy glory, that I should worship thee?*

For behold, I could not look upon God, except his glory should come upon me, and I were strengthened before him. But I can look upon thee in the natural man. Is it not so, surely?

Blessed be the name of my God, for his Spirit hath not altogether withdrawn from me, or else where is thy glory, for it is darkness unto me?⁸⁵

When Lucifer persisted and again commanded Moses to worship him, the ancient lawgiver called upon the Lord for strength and declared: “Depart from me, Satan, for this one God only will I worship, *which is the God of glory.*”⁸⁶ One who is aware of his true relationship to God will only worship a being of glory and power, for only in this way can he acquire the divine nature of God.

Worshipping God in Spirit and in Truth

Because the truth and light of God's glory are communicated to man through the Holy Spirit, man must worship God in Spirit and in truth. True worship is not a mechanical procedure; nor is it merely a mental process. As recorded in Joseph Smith's Inspired Revision of the Bible, Jesus said to the woman of Samaria:

. . . the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in Spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him.

For unto such hath God promised his Spirit. And they who worship him, must worship in Spirit and in truth.⁸⁷

The Hope of Glory

In true worship, man should exercise a living and intelligent hope for the glory of Christ, or for the glory which the Man of Holiness has given to His Only Begotten Son, for by true worship man is made a partaker of that glory and power. Joseph Smith's Inspired Revision of the Bible gives the Apostle John's testimony of Jesus as follows:

. . . in the beginning was the word, even the Son, who is made flesh, and sent unto us by the will of the Father. *And as many as believe on his name shall receive of his fulness. And of his fulness have all we received, even immortality and eternal life, through his grace.* For the law [of carnal commandments] was given through Moses, but *life and truth* came through Jesus Christ.⁸⁸

Jesus exemplified the desire that man should have of attaining the glory of God. "I have glorified thee on earth," He prayed to His Father. "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."⁸⁹

Jesus also wanted His disciples to be glorified so that they could be united with Him in the great system of celestial truth and power over which the Father presides.⁹⁰ Through the program of the gospel, they were to be glorified in Him as He is glorified in the Father. He therefore continued in His prayer to the Father:

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

That they all may be one; *as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee*, that they also may be *one in us*: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

And *the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one*:

I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.⁹¹

The union for which Jesus prayed was more than a union of heart and purpose. It was celestial union which could be achieved only by developing the divine powers of truth and light of His Father's glory in His disciples. They were to be one, He observed, "as thou, Father, art *in me*, and *I in thee*." Of the way this was to be done, Jesus said: "And *the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even*

as we are one: *I in them, and thou in me*, that they may be made perfect in one.”⁹²

In discussing this subject, Joseph Smith observed that “salvation consists in the glory, authority, majesty, power and dominion which Jehovah possesses.”⁹³ That which God does, he stressed, is designed to “end in the greatest amount of good and glory to those who become the recipients of his laws and ordinances.”⁹⁴ Having quoted the above statement of Jesus, the Prophet commented:

What language can be plainer than this? The Savior surely intended to be understood by his disciples. . . . He says, And the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one. As much as to say, that *unless they have the glory which the Father had given him, they could not be one with them*: For he says he had given them the glory that the Father had given him, that they might be one; or in other words, to make them one.⁹⁵

When Jesus ministered to the Nephites, He expressed a similar desire. First, He endowed the disciples whom He chose with glory to the extent that “they were encircled about as if it were by fire,” and “they were as white as the countenance and also the garments of Jesus.” Then Christ thanked the Father for purifying them, and He prayed that all who would believe their words would also be purified by divine power. Finally, the Master said: “Father, I pray not for the world, but for those whom thou hast given me out of the world, because of their faith, that they may be purified in me, *that I may be in them as thou, Father, art in me, that we may be one, that I may be glorified in them.*”⁹⁶

Because the ultimate purpose of the gospel is to glorify those who come unto Christ, the Nephite prophets taught that man must “come to a knowledge of the glory of God”;⁹⁷ and having obtained this knowledge, man must exercise “a hope” therein.⁹⁸ This was General Mormon’s desire in behalf of his son Moroni.⁹⁹ Jacob admonished his brethren to be reconciled unto the Father through Christ and thereby obtain “a good hope of glory in him.”¹⁰⁰ Aaron taught the Lamanites “that the sting of death should be swallowed up in the hopes of glory.”¹⁰¹ And Alma testified: “I know that he [God] will raise me up at the last day, to dwell with him in glory.”¹⁰²

The restored gospel was given to men for the same purpose: that they might be “made partakers” of the glory of God.¹⁰³ A revelation in February, 1832, explained in some detail the doctrine of glorification as it relates to the final destiny of all classes of men.¹⁰⁴ An earlier revelation stated that the Lamanites must come to the knowledge of their fathers, that they might learn to “rely upon the merits of Jesus Christ, and be glorified through faith in his name.”¹⁰⁵

The hope of glory was expected to sustain the Saints in all their earthly trials. “Even if they [the world] do unto you as they have done unto me, blessed are ye,” Christ explained in a revelation, “for you shall dwell with me in glory.”¹⁰⁶ To a member of the Church who mourned the loss of a loved one, the Prophet said in comfort: “You shall soon have the company of your companion in a world of glory.”¹⁰⁷ Nevertheless, the powers of spiritual darkness and death weigh heavily upon man in mortality. “Notwithstanding all this glory,” Joseph Smith therefore observed in a funeral address, “we for a moment lose sight of it, and mourn the loss, but we do not mourn as those without hope.”¹⁰⁸ He held that to fail to qualify for the glory of God after death is a greater catastrophe than physical death. “We have a knowledge that those we bury here

God will bring up again, clothed upon and quickened by the Spirit of the great God,” he declared; “and what mattereth it whether we lay them down, or we lay [sic] down with them when we can keep them no longer?”¹⁰⁹ “The great misery of departed spirits in the world of spirits, where they go after death,” the Prophet stressed, “is to know that they come short of the glory that others enjoy and that they might have enjoyed themselves, and they are their own accusers.”¹¹⁰

Because he considered the glorification of man to be a final result of the program of the gospel, Joseph Smith admonished the Saints to live by every word that comes from God, “lest they come short of the glory that is reserved for the faithful.”¹¹¹ He warned: “I say to all those who are disposed to set up stakes for the Almighty, You will come short of the glory of God.”¹¹² Like the Apostle Paul, the latter-day Seer taught that the hope of true Christians is to be glorified in Christ, and that any suffering the Saints might be called upon to endure would not be worthy to be compared with the glory which would be revealed in them. With earnest expectation, they should “rejoice in hope of the glory of God”;¹¹³ and they should wait patiently for the manifestation of glory which is given to the sons of God, by which they are delivered from the bondage of their fallen spiritual state into the glorious liberty, light, and life of the children of God.¹¹⁴ Having exemplified this hope and given their lives to witness their testimony of the restored gospel, it was said of the Prophet and his brother Hyrum: “They lived for glory; they died for glory; and glory is their eternal reward.”¹¹⁵

Summary

The restored gospel has its center in the atoning mission of Jesus Christ. For this reason the proclamation of the testimony that Jesus was indeed the Son of God is the basic message of the gospel. For man to embrace the gospel, he must exercise living faith in Christ, repent of his sins, and be baptized by a legal administrator. He must then receive the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of authorized hands, which gives him a right to the manifestations of the Holy Ghost in all their divine expressions. This is the basic program of the gospel. But in addition, there are higher ordinances within the plan of life and salvation, and the challenge is given to man to endure to the end and make his calling and election sure to celestial glory. Finally, man must overcome all things by faith; and having been raised from the grave in the resurrection, he must be judged by Christ as being worthy to receive eternal life.

Essentially the gospel is a system of divine mercy, truth, and power. The forgiveness of personal sins is given to man through the preparatory gospel; and in the gift of the Holy Ghost, man is given access to divine truth and power. All the principles and ordinances within the divine plan are designed to bring man to the point of faith and spiritual excellence which will enable him to enter the presence of God and be endowed with celestial glory. This means that man is organized with the capacity to acquire the attributes and powers of God, and a major purpose of the gospel is to glorify man in Christ, as Jesus has been glorified in the Father. To this end, man must worship God in Spirit and in truth; he must acquire a hope for the glory of God; and he must act upon that hope until he attains eternal life, which is to possess the living attributes and powers of celestial glory in the resurrection.¹¹⁶

Endnotes

-
- 1 *History of the Church*, ed. B. H. Roberts (Salt Lake City, 1946, IV, p. 537. (Italics by the writer.) Hereafter this source will be abbreviated HC, followed by the volume and page number. As in Volume I of this study, all italics have been added by the writer unless otherwise indicated.
- 2 *Ibid.*, p. 595.
- 3 *Ibid.*, V, p. 529.
- 4 D&C 128:19.
- 5 HC, II, p. 364.
- 6 *Ibid.*, III, p. 30.
- 7 See Volume I of this study, the section in chapter eleven entitled "Procedures of the Grand Council of the Gods." See also Moses 4:2; 2 Nephi 31:10; 3 Nephi 11:11.
- 8 Nephi 11:7.
- 9 Nephi 11:10-11.
- 10 Nephi 11:14.
- 11 Nephi 27:13-15.
- 12 Nephi 27:19-20.
- 13 Nephi 11:32-35.
- 14 Nephi 31:17-18.
- 15 Nephi 9:23-24.
- 16 D&C 39:6.
- 17 D&C 33:10-13. See HC, V, p. 344, where Joseph Smith stressed the message of the gospel which the Elders were to preach.
- 18 HC, VI, p. 57.
- 19 *Times and Seasons*, II (March 1, 1842), p. 709. This publication was the official church organ of the Latter-day Saints between 1839 and 1846. Hereafter this source will be abbreviated TS, followed by the volume, date, and page number.
- 20 See HC, IV, p. 541, as edited by B. H. Roberts. See also *ibid.*, II, pp. 255-256, where Joseph Smith discusses the first principles and ordinances of the gospel.
- 21 *Ibid.*, VI, p. 316.
- 22 *Ibid.*, V, p. 499.
- 23 *Ibid.*, II, p. 256.
- 24 Nephi 27:16. To Nephi at an earlier time, the Lord also made this challenge an integral part of the gospel program. See 2 Nephi 31:15-16 in light of the verses that precede and follow these verses.
- 25 HC, IV, p. 425.
- 26 I. R., 2 Corinthians 5:17-21.
- 27 HC, II, p. 8.
- 28 *The Improvement Era*, XXI, p. 104.
- 29 HC, III, p. 379. Again the Prophet said: "The doctrine of eternal judgments belongs to the first principles of the Gospel in these last days."-*Ibid.*, VI, p. 364.
- 30 *Ibid.*, IV, p. 359. See also *ibid.*, VI, p. 58.
- 31 *Ibid.*, III, p. 396.
- 32 Nephi 9:22.
- 33 Nephi 27:14-18.
- 34 Alma 42:23.
- 35 Alma 12:12-15.
- 36 TS, III (September 1, 1842), p. 904. For the statements by the Apostle Paul to which the Prophet refers, see Romans 1:16; 2 Timothy 1:10.
- 37 *Latter Day Saints' Messenger And Advocate*, Kirtland, Ohio, II (March, 1836), p. 273. (Italics in the

original.) This was the official church organ of the Latter-day Saints between 1834 and 1837. Hereafter this source will be abbreviated MA, followed by the volume, date, and page number.

38 *Journal of Discourses*, XX, pp. 363-364. This work is a collection of discourses delivered by leading authorities of the Church between 1851 and 1886. Most of these men were taught by the Prophet. Hereafter this source will be abbreviated JD, followed by the volume and page number.

39 D&C 121:46.

40 D&C 109:15.

41 JD, IX, pp. 288-289.

42 Mosiah 27:25-26.

43 Matthew 19:28.

44 See Volume I of this study, the section in chapter seventeen entitled "Human Life Must Be Transformed by the Power of Christ."

45 Mosiah 27:26.

46 Moroni 10:7.

47 D&C 50:24.

48 D&C 88:66-68.

49 Nephi 31:14; 32:2; Mormon 9:24.

50 Nephi 25:25.

51 D&C 84:33.

52 HC, III, p. 380; JD, XI, p. 10; XII, p. 270.

53 See Volume I of this work.

54 D&C 20:17-29.

55 HC, VI, p. 250.

56 D&C 84:27. Since the time Christ made his atoning sacrifice and thus fulfilled the law of carnal commandments which God gave to Israel through Moses, the preparatory gospel has not included that law in its program. The law of carnal commandments was considered to be a schoolmaster to bring the Israelites to Christ. See Galatians 3:24.

57 HC, IV, p. 42.

58 *Ibid.*, I, p. 39; VI, pp. 249-250.

59 D&C 84:19.

60 D&C 84:20-22. For other statements indicating that man must be a recipient of divine power in order to see God, see D&C 67:10-12; Moses 1:1-11.

61 This cannot take place while man is in mortality. In his Inspired Revision of the Bible, Joseph Smith corrected a statement by the Apostle Paul to indicate that man does not leave the initial principles and ordinances of the gospel behind as he goes on to perfection. See I. R., Hebrews 6:1; also HC, VI, p. 58. But when man is finally perfected, the preparatory gospel will have fulfilled its purposes. Its functions can then be discontinued or taken from the earth.

62 D&C 13; Smith 2:69.

63 There are two kinds of sons of Levi: (1) those who are literal sons of Levi in the flesh and (2) those who become sons of Moses and of Aaron, who were of the tribe of Levi (see Exodus 4:16; 6:18, 20; Numbers 26:59), by receiving the priesthood and by being regenerated by means of its divine powers (see D&C 84:32-34). There are also two kinds of sacrifice by the sons of Levi: (1) a blood sacrifice which will be made for purposes of restoration, in the temple when the New Jerusalem is built (see HC, IV, pp. 210-212); and (2) a sacrifice of service in extending the blessings of the gospel to others (see D&C 128:24).

64 D&C 128:24.

65 Ether 3:14. See chapter six, the section entitled "Nature of the Gift."

66 This point will be discussed in volume IV of this work.

67 D&C 46:7.

-
- 68 HC, VI, p. 305.
- 69 *Ibid.*, II, p. 5.
- 70 D&C 101:38.
- 71 HC, II, p. 6.
- 72 *Lectures on Faith*, No. 5. These lectures were published as part of the original edition of the Doctrine and Covenants, at Kirtland, Ohio, in 1835, and were designated as theological lectures “on the doctrine of the Church Of The Latter Day Saints.” Joseph Smith was not their sole author, but they were written by a committee over which he presided. This committee was appointed in a meeting of the High Council at Kirtland, September 24, 1834, the minutes of which state:
 The council then proceeded to appoint a committee to arrange the items of the doctrine of Jesus Christ, for the government of the Church of Latter-day Saints, which Church was organized and commenced its rise on the 6th of April, 1830. These items are to be taken from the Bible, Book of Mormon, and the revelations which have been given to the Church up to this date, or that shall be given until such arrangements are made.
 Councilor Samuel H. Smith nominated President Joseph Smith, Jun., Oliver Cowdery, Sidney Rigdon, and Frederick G. Williams to compose said committee, which was seconded by Councilor Hyrum Smith. The Councilors then gave their vote in the affirmative, which was also agreed to by the whole conference.-HC, II, p. 165. See also p. 180.
 It is not known specifically which member, or members, of the committee put the *Lectures on Faith* in their written form. But there can be no doubt that the theological ideas which they contain came from Joseph Smith. All the major ideas within them can be found in his revelations and teachings before 1834.
- 73 D&C 93:19-20.
- 74 See Moses 1:17; 5:8; Moroni 4:2; D&C 20:29. See also Moses 1:21; 6:52; D&C 14:8; 18:18, 23, 40; 42:3; 50:31; 88:64.
- 75 Moses 6:52; 2 Nephi 25:20; D&C 18:21-25.
- 76 For a discussion of this subject, see chapters eight and nine of Volume I of this study.
- 77 D&C 93:12.
- 78 D&C 93:12-13, 16.
- 79 D&C 93:28.
- 80 D&C 88:6.
- 81 See 3 Nephi 19:28-29.
- 82 D&C 93:20. See Volume I of this study, the section in chapter eight entitled “Service the Pathway to Eternal Life.”
- 83 D&C 93:12.
- 84 JD, V, p. 50.
- 85 Moses 1:13-15.
- 86 Moses 1:19-20.
- 87 I. R., John 4:24-26.
- 88 I. R., John 1:16-18.
- 89 John 17:4-5.
- 90 The relationship of the Father and the Son in glory has been discussed in Volume I of this study, in the section in chapter eight entitled “The Relationship in Glory of the Father and the Son.”
- 91 John 17:20-23.
- 92 *Ibid.*
- 93 *Lectures on Faith*, No. 7.
- 94 HC, V, p. 135.
- 95 *Lectures on Faith*, No. 7. Again the Prophet said: “Jesus prayed that those that the Father had given him out of the world might be made one *in them*, as they were one.”-HC, V, p. 426. See also D&C 50:43.
- 96 Nephi 19:14, 25, 28-29.

-
- 97 Mosiah 4:1.
98 Jacob 4:4.
99 Moroni 9:25.
100 Jacob 4:11.
101 Alma 22:14.
102 Alma 36:28.
103 D&C 133:57.
104 D&C 76.
105 D&C 3:20.
106 D&C 6:30.
107 HC, V, pp. 360-363.
108 *Ibid.*, IV, p. 554.
109 *Ibid.*, V, pp. 360-363.
110 *Ibid.*, p. 425.
111 *Ibid.*, p. 404.
112 *Ibid.*, p. 554.
113 Romans 5:2.
114 See Romans 8:16-21.
115 D&C 135:6.
116 See D&C 88:3-4; Moses 6:59.